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OPEN LETTERS.

A cheap and excellent plant press.

A board with weights is a good press except where one moves around upon his collecting tours. In this case something more portable is desired. I discard as clumsy all presses formed of wood. Several forms are advertised, yet I have seen none that meet the requirements for lightness, strength and portability. The common board with weights, while it is most often used, does not permit free circulation of the air, hence specimens dry exceedingly slowly in this way. The press described below is one which any tinner can make, and excels any of the manufactured presses which have come to my notice.

Out of common coppered iron wire three-sixteenths inch in diameter, two rectangles, each twelve by eighteen inches, are made. The tinner then solders a sheet of galvanized wire screen, with about one-fourth inch mesh, upon these frames. The edges of the wire screen should be turned up over the wire. One of these frames, after having the screen soldered on, is taken for the bottom piece, and three pieces of the same kind of wire are soldered at equal distances crosswise on the side of the bottom frame which is not to come in contact with the dryers. At the six points where the ends of these crosspieces are soldered to the frame, pieces of suitable chain are rigidly soldered. On the other frame three pieces which are long enough for each end to project about three-eighths of an inch are soldered. These ends are doubly bent to fit snugly around the wire of the rim and to afford curved hooks upon which the links of the chains attached to the other piece may be hooked. These ends can be bent cold and trued up with the file. For the chain I used dog-chain having links about one inch in length. In this press plants, if exposed to the sun and wind, dry with surprising rapidity, and the resulting specimens possess a freshness and pliability that are not secured with presses of other kinds. The press costs from \$1 to \$1.50.

I use a similar though much lighter press for a portfolio, attaching a shoulder-strap by means of light snaps upon the ends for carrying. I snap the fastenings over the wire on one of the edges of the bottom piece.

Blackburn University, Carlinville, Ill.

WM. E. ANDREWS.

NOTES AND NEWS.

DR. B. D. HALSTED has a very interesting paper on the doubling of flowers in *Popular Science Monthly* for July.

PROFESSOR L. M. UNDERWOOD, of Syracuse University, has been granted a year's leave of absence. He will spend the time chiefly at Cambridge in the prosecution of some special work.

A PRELIMINARY list of the mosses of Staten Island has been published by Mrs. Elizabeth G. Britton. The list represents the collections of eight years, and includes one hundred and one species.

MR. C. R. ORCUTT, of San Diego, California, is making a special study of the *Cactaceæ*, and would be glad to receive living plants or other material from any locality. He desires to cultivate all the varieties possible.